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KLAN
TEMPE, ARIZONA

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The Ku Klux Klan is planning a membership drive in Arizona, the organization's top state official said.

Tempe carpenter Bob Cretella, the "Kleagle" or Klan leader in Arizona, said the he will begin distributing information in city parks in the next few weeks in an effort to increase the organization's influence in the state and inform the public about what he called "the new Klan."

The organization is trying to overcome its reputation for violent racism and anti-Semitism by encouraging voter registration and holding peaceful rallies, Cretella said.

"We are a new breed, not like the violent past," he said. "The imagery of tyranny is what we're trying to break."

Cretella said he has met with Tempe city officials to inform him of his plans.

City Attorney David Merkel said the Klan has the same right as any other group to pass out information, as long as it is done in an orderly manner.

"It's the old balancing act," he said. "He's got a right to exercise his First Amendment freedoms per the U.S. Supreme Court and per the U.S. Constitution."

Cretella was asked to inform the city a week in advance if he plans to hold a Klan rally, Merkel said, so the police can provide adequate security.

"We will have a sufficient number of officers available when his is going on to monitor their safety, both the people handing out pamphlets and the general public," police spokesman Ray Golz said.

The Klan has nothing against minorities as long as they "earn" what they have rather than obtaining it free from the government, Cretella said. He said whites have been the victims of "reverse discrimination" in which minorities and aliens receive inordinate amounts of government aid.

Cretella said he wants to establish several local chapters or "Klaverns" around the state. He declined to say how many Klan members there are in Arizona, but admitted the number is not large enough to merit appointment of a "Grand Dragon" to oversee Klan activities in the state.

The Klan will enroll "white Christians" only, Cretella said. He said minorities cannot belong.

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He also said Jews need not apply for Klan membership. "They basically are the ones who are blamed throughout history for the murder of our lord," he said.

Among the Klan goals that will be promoted in Arizona, Cretella said, are creation of a "three tiered" school system with separate schools for whites and blacks as well as integrated schools; the death penalty for rapists and drug dealers; legislation to prevent discrimination against whites; and increased authority for the FBI and the CIA to fight "advancing world communism."

The Klan's goals are sensible, Cretella said, and he wants members to work within the system. The Klan, he said, deplores violence.

"I'm going statewide," Cretella said. "Right now I'm a spark in a little pile of kindling. I hope to turn that into a blaze."